

IN THE WORKS

TUNE IN HERE FOR NEWS ABOUT PERSONNEL SYSTEM REFORM IN WASHINGTON

September 2004

INSIDE IN THE WORKS:

Concluding Historic Bargaining Negotiations	1
First Classifications Set for New Occupational Categories	2
The New Civil Service System: Comparing Today to Tomorrow	3
How Will Reform Affect Washington Management Service (WMS) Employees?	4



CONCLUDING HISTORIC BARGAINING NEGOTIATIONS

This year's contract negotiations marked the first time in Washington's history that state employee unions have been able to bargain directly with the governor for wages and benefits. Agreements now have been reached with all unions representing state employees.

"I am proud of our state's new collective bargaining process. These agreements are a credit to the hard work of everyone involved," said Gov. Gary Locke.

If ratified, all contracts would include a 3.2 percent wage increase starting July 2005, and varying increases in the second year of the contracts.

In addition, contracts with unions representing employees whose salaries have lagged more than 25 percent behind market rates for workers in similar jobs would provide varying increases to bring those salaries to within 25 percent of the prevailing rate.

Employees receiving these market rate increases were identified using the 2002 Salary Survey conducted by the state Department of Personnel.

The increases affect hundreds of job classes including park rangers, engineers, dental assistants, lab technicians, plumbers, judges, welders, chemists, geologists, cartographers and electrical inspectors.

Continued on next page...

Agreements reached with the following unions:

- Service Employees International Union
- Washington Federation of State Employees
- Washington Public Employees Association
- International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers
- The Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 117
- United Food and Commercial Workers
- Coalition of unions (includes Brotherhood of Teamsters, Local 760; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; Washington State Patrol Communication Managers Association; Plumbers & Pipefitters; International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots; Washington Association of Professional Biologists; and Washington State Nurses Association)

VIEW PAST ISSUES: AUG 2003 - AUG 2004

All tentative agreements reflect an earlier settlement negotiated with the unions in a coalition agreement in which the state agreed to contribute 88 percent of estimated health benefit costs, leaving employee contributions at 12 percent.

The most recent agreement with the Service Employees International Union, Local 1199 NW, represents the last of nine agreements between the governor and state employee unions in negotiations that began in February.

Agreements are due to the state Office of Financial Management by October 1. Locke will submit the economic terms of the agreements to the Legislature in his 2005-07 budget proposal.

“These agreements represent a lot of hard work on both sides of the table,” said chief negotiator Eva Santos. “It’s now up to bargaining unit members to ratify the contracts, so that they can be included in the governor’s budget proposal.”

If state workers represented by the unions ratify the agreements and funding is approved by the Legislature, the wage increases will take effect July 1, 2005, the first year of the two-year contracts. Under these tentative agreements, all employees covered by the contracts can vote on ratification. For questions regarding the ratification process, contact your union representative.



FIRST CLASS SPECIFICATIONS SET FOR NEW OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES

On September 9, Department of Personnel Director Gene Matt adopted the new class specifications for the first group of job classes to be consolidated into occupational categories. These specifications will take effect June 1, 2005. This first group includes consolidations that can be accomplished with relative ease and little or no cost impact, such as:

- Single series classes where the work is so unique that it wouldn’t make sense to combine them with other classes.
- Clerical, office support and secretarial classes.
- Some information technology classes.

Future moves

With the phased-in implementation of the classification plan, the remaining classifications will be moved to the new system in groups. The next two groups are due for review and adoption after the first of the year and will become effective January 1, 2006.

By the time these first three groups are complete, the number of classifications will be reduced to about 1,800 from the 2,400 in place when the Personnel System Reform Act was passed in 2002. Further consolidations are expected to take place over the course of the next several years.

Learn more

The newly adopted class specifications, along with lists of the classes that will be included in the first three groups, can be found on the Department of Personnel website at

<http://hr.dop.wa.gov/hrreform/classplan.htm>. ★

VIEW PAST ISSUES: AUG 2003 - Aug 2004

THE NEW CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM: COMPARING TODAY TO TOMORROW

As promised in the last edition of *In the Works*, the next few issues will compare practices within the current civil service system to the new rules and other changes coming in July 2005. We'll be taking one subject area at a time. This month we're covering classification. The following changes apply to all classified employees.

SUMMARY OF CLASSIFICATION CHANGES

Current	Future
There are two separate classification systems: one for general government and one for classified employees in higher education.	The two systems will be merged into one.
Class specifications narrowly define job responsibilities. As business needs change, specifications make it difficult to change the work assigned. New classes are sometimes created to cover work that may be only slightly different in nature.	Specifications will be written more broadly to allow for more flexibility as individual position needs change.
General government uses classification questionnaires and higher education uses position descriptions to determine which class is the best fit for a position (that is, how to "allocate" a position).	The new position description form provides more information about the specific position, such as the skills/competencies needed to be successful.
Employees may submit a revised classification questionnaire or position description to have the allocation of their position reviewed.	Employees may initiate position reviews using a new position review request form.
For general government, employers are delegated allocation authority by the Department of Personnel. For higher education, all allocation authority is decentralized.	The new rules give all employers authority to decide which class is the best fit for a given position.
When an employee's position is reallocated, the employee is appointed to the position if he/she has been doing the duties for: 12 months for general government 6 months for higher education If the employee hasn't done the higher-level duties long enough, he/she must be referred from a register or eligible list to be appointed.	An employee remains in the reallocated position if he/she has performed the higher-level duties for six months. If the employee hasn't done the higher-level duties for six months, the employee can be promoted to the reallocated position without being certified or referred.

Go to <http://hr.dop.wa.gov/hrreform> for more details, including the text of the adopted rules, frequently asked questions, and fact sheets summarizing the changes in key areas. ★

VIEW PAST ISSUES: AUG 2003 - Aug 2004

HOW WILL REFORM AFFECT WASHINGTON MANAGEMENT SERVICE (WMS) EMPLOYEES?

Most of the focus up to now has been on the changes that are coming for general classified employees, leaving those in the Washington Management Service (WMS) to ask, "What role will WMS managers play in personnel reform?"

The answer: WMS managers will be critical to ensuring that personnel reform results in high-performance government. A new leadership development program is being created to give WMS managers the skills they need to be successful. In addition, the Department of Personnel, the Labor Relations Office, and the Department of General Administration are teaming up to prepare an array of training opportunities to help managers prepare for their role in applying the new civil service rules and managing in a union environment.

With help from managers and human resource representatives from a variety of state agencies, the Department of Personnel reviewed the rules governing WMS positions and identified changes needed to support personnel reform. Revised rules will be ready for review later this fall and are scheduled for adoption in January 2005.

Under the Personnel System Reform Act, WMS positions are exempt from collective bargaining, but will be covered by the same competitive contracting provisions as other civil service positions.

Stay tuned for more articles on the status of the new WMS rules and the training being developed!

Have feedback? Email it to washingtonworks@ofm.wa.gov

*Check out the WASHINGTON WORKS website at
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for more information.*

*Use the online [feedback form](#) to comment
on any aspect of the reform effort.*

VIEW PAST ISSUES: AUG 2003 - Aug 2004

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